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755

DRUG DEATHS HIT RECORD HIGH

And with the rise of fentanyl over the past year, B.C.'s chief coroner warns that using drugs safely is 'almost impossible' as the drug supply is increasingly toxic

Jen St. Denis
Metro | Vancouver

In August, 50 people died of drug overdoses in British Columbia.

In September, 57 died.

In October, the number jumped to 67 — an increase that worried health officials, who had thought that increasing the supply and training for administering the overdose reversal drug naloxone was making a difference.

In November, drug overdoses caused 128 deaths — 61 more than the previous month, and nearly double the October total. That spike has brought the total number of deaths between January and November to 755, the highest number ever recorded by the BC Coroner Service and a 70 per cent increase over this time last year

"We're quite fearful that the drug supply is increasingly toxic, it's increasingly unpredictable, and it's very, very difficult to manage," said Lisa Lapointe, B.C.'s chief coroner, referring to the increasing prevalence of the synthetic opioid fentanyl being added to many illicit drugs.

"Those who ... attempt to use drugs safely, it's almost impossible."

With advance notice from the coroner that November numbers would be much higher, provincial health officials announced three weeks ago that several overdose prevention sites would open in Vancouver, Surrey and Victoria. People can go inside the sites to inject drugs, and are given first aid if they overdose.

Health officials have insisted the sites are temporary and are not supervised injection sites, which are currently difficult to open because of a strict Conservative-era law that current federal health minister Jane Philpott has promised to change.

If there is any good news to be found within the grim statistics, it is that no deaths have occurred at any of those overdose prevention sites. And no one has died at a volunteer-run tent that has been operating since September, without official permission or government funding, out of an alley in the heart of the Downtown Eastside. People can smoke or snort drugs at that site, not just inject.

"We're pretty steady, we get about 100 people a day," said Sarah Blyth, the Downtown Eastside market coordinator and one of the organizers of the tent.

"We're coming up to welfare (day)...it's happening this Wednesday, so I imagine up until Christmas it's going to be pretty busy."

At the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users storefront further down East Hastings Street, Linda Bird confirmed the overdose prevention site located there has been busy, with around 60 people a day passing through.

Vancouver Coastal Health has announced a fourth overdose prevention site in Vancouver, while Fraser Health has added more sites in Langley, Abbotsford and Maple Ridge.

Health authorities in the Interior, Vancouver Island and the north are also planning to open sites in the future, said Perry Kendall, B.C.'s health officer.

"You must use (drugs) in the presence of somebody who can help you," Lapointe emphasized. "We are seeing people die with a naloxone kit open beside them, but they haven't even had time to use it. We are seeing people die with a needle in their arm or a tablet nearby...You must go somewhere where someone is able to give you immediate medical assistance."

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Obama pardons 78, shortens sentences for 153 in record number of clemencies granted. **World**

Promoters feel the pinch

MUSIC

Organizers say permits for all-ages venues too restrictive

Stuart Neatby
For Metro | Vancouver

Organizers of all-ages music events in east Vancouver, frustrated with what they describe as restrictive city permits and red tape, fear the few venues that exist may not last.

The City of Vancouver has no dedicated space for music events geared to under-19 crowds. As a result, young musicians and promoters often organize shows for all-ages audiences in basements of residential homes, in warehouses and in studio spaces. Some are held without city permits, or in spaces not up to fire codes.

Last Friday, roughly 150 young people gathered for a show at a converted studio space behind a mechanic shop in east Vancouver.

The space, which goes by various names, is currently the most sustainable all-ages venue in the city, according to multiple promoters.

Karlan Morrison, a 26-year-old musician and bartender, co-ordinates the space. Unlike similar DIY music venues in east Vancouver, Morrison insists that he and his partner run a legal and safe music venue.

Isaiah Lehtinen, a hip-hop performer better known by his stage name Hermit, performs at an all-ages venue in east Vancouver on Oct. 21. STUART NEATBY/FOR METRO

Smoke detectors are checked regularly, emergency lights are installed above both primary and emergency exits, and licensed security guards watch the entrance.

Morrison asked that the location of his venue not be identified in order to ensure crowds of attendees remained manageable.

He believes that the restrictions under the city's Arts Event licence, which limits venues to three shows per month, makes it next to impossible for organizers to pay their costs.

"They are super adamant about only having three shows a month, which doesn't pay any bills. It makes it really hard for us to even talk about margins," said Morrison.

With no liquor revenue, door cover usually accounts for the majority of revenue for promoters. Morrison often struggles to pay rent for the space.

Mati Cormier has been organizing all-ages shows in the basement of a residential home in east Vancouver for over a year. The 17-year-old runs her own music promotion company, Trash City Productions, and estimates that she has organized over 100 shows over the last two years. She admits that the venue she uses is not ideal.

"Ideally I would like to see a space specified for the kind of events I'm hosting — an all-ages space that has proper fire codes and is big enough to accommodate 150 kids," she said.

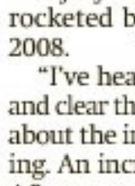
Vancouver Coun. Elizabeth Ball points to the deaths of 36 people after a fire at an unpermitted party in Oakland, Calif., as reason for the city's permitting and safety requirements. She says that having venues up to fire code is the biggest concern for city staff.

"I think it's really important that young people and young musicians work with the city because our guys really do have (their) interests at heart," she said.

Ball expects city staff to present a report to council early in the New Year with recommendations about Arts Event and all-ages licensing.

TRANSPORTATION

Province calls for review, caps rate hikes



Matt Kieltyka
Metro | Vancouver

The British Columbia government has ordered an independent review of ICBC's operations and capped any further basic insurance rate increases at 4.9 per cent next year.

Transportation Minister Todd Stone made the announcement Monday, a month after rate increases and internal documents warning of worst-case scenario possible rate hikes of more than 40 per cent by 2020 caused public uproar throughout the province.

The review, which will be undertaken early next year by an undetermined third party, will focus on making recommendations to keep future rate increases in line with inflation, Stone said.

ICBC raised basic auto insurance rates by 4.9 per cent in November, after a year that saw vehicle damage costs increase 17 per cent, crashes go up 15 per cent since 2013 and injury claims rise 14 per cent.

Injury claims costs have skyrocketed by 60 per cent since 2008.

"I've heard the message loud and clear that people are worried about the increasing costs of living. An increase in the range of 4.9 per cent, year after year, is still too high for more British Columbians," said Stone.

The minister said government is "prepared to change" ICBC if necessary to limit future rate increases, but added privatization is not on the agenda.

"What that change may look like is unknown and it would be a mistake to presupposed the outcomes of the review," he said. "We're open and eager to see what these experts recommend. It is not our intent to move to a privatized model, our objective is to find ways to work within the current model and, in doing so, put B.C. ratepayers first."

Stone has also directed the B.C. Utilities Commission not to approve a basic rate hike exceeding 4.9 per cent when ICBC makes its next application in August 2017.

In an attempt to offset the increased costs, ICBC transferred $472 million from its optional insurance business to its basic business, a move New Democratic Party critic for ICBC Adrian Dix called a one-time quick fix.

WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

SCIENCE

Students design experiment for space station

Wanyee Li
Metro | Vancouver

Few Canadians could boast they have sent something into space but two Coquitlam high school students are now in that elite group after their science experiment was selected for a trip to the International Space Station (ISS).

Astronauts at the space station will conduct the experiment designed by Alexa Durand and Brenda Shen from Riverside Secondary.

They received the good news in the principal's office two weeks ago.

"It was awesome. We were so excited. We honestly couldn't believe it. We were so happy we were chosen and this is something that doesn't come around often," said Shen.

The students entered their experiment into the NASA-sponsored Student SpaceFlight Experiments Program (SSEP), which allows students to use the ISS as a science lab. The Coquitlam pair was one of two Canadian teams selected in the finals.

The 17-year-olds want to find out whether micro-gravity — where objects appear to float, like they do in space — increases the strength of a type of concrete made with a by-product of fossil-fuel combustion.

If the experiment suggests their hypothesis is correct, the concrete, called fly-ash concrete, could become a more common building material for construction companies. It could benefit both the construction industry and the environment, they said.

Durand and Shen got the idea at an orientation held by the district for students aiming to apply to the SSEP.

"We had an orientation at Heritage Wood Secondary School and the whole building is made out of concrete — the walls, the classrooms — and we got the idea from there," said Durand.

From there, the pair conducted preliminary experiments in ice cube trays and wrote a five-page research proposal for the competition. It was an undertaking the two could not have achieved without the help of teachers and community members, said Shen.

Simon Fraser University even let the students use some of its equipment for the project, including a petrographic microscope (a device used for rocks) and mechanical tester to determine the strength of concrete samples.

Brenda Shen, left, and Alexa Durand conduct an experiment on fly-ash concrete. CONTRIBUTED

"This is definitely something we couldn't do by ourselves. It was a team effort. We really appreciate the help," said Shen.

The students are planning to enter the Greater Vancouver Regional Science Fair in 2017 while they wait for astronauts to conduct their experiment on the ISS.

A rocket will transport the necessary materials and equipment on June 1, said Durand.

Both Durand and Shen plan to attend post-secondary to study something in the science field.

Police shoot man wielding machete

CRIME

SkyTrains delayed after violent rush hour incident

Wanyee Li
Metro | Vancouver

Police confirmed they shot a man at 29th Station Monday morning after he allegedly threatened passengers with a machete and broke out of a SkyTrain that officers tried to contain him in.

The incident, which happened at 8:30 a.m., resulted in major SkyTrain delays for Vancouverites' commutes on a day when traffic was already snarled from the slush and snow.

Transit police officers located the man in a SkyTrain car, evacuated the train and surrounding area, then closed the SkyTrain doors, trapping the suspect inside, according to a written VPD release.

Vancouver police officers arrived at the scene minutes later.

The suspect then broke his way out with the machete and did not follow police directions.

That's when a Vancouver police officer shot him, said VPD.

The suspect has not been identified and is still in hospital. Police have not provided an update on his condition.

SkyTrains were able to resume travelling through but not stopping at 29th Station in both directions as of 9:40 a.m.

The machete was still at the scene, behind police tape outside of 29th Station as of 10:30 a.m.

The Independent Investigations Office will be investigating the case, according to a written release. - WITH FILES FROM DAVID P. BALL

Police taped off the 29th SkyTrain Station Monday morning.
DAVID P. BALL/METRO

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TRANSIT

Long wait times annoy commuters

David P. Ball
Metro | Vancouver

One hundred fifty minutes after Kiran Sugathan secured his coveted spot at the front of the queue for the 99 B-Line bus at Commercial-Broadway station, he was no closer to getting to work on Monday.

"I've been waiting from 6 a.m.," he told Metro at 8:30 a.m. "I don't want to miss my job."

Behind him: 370 other commuters frustrated by the lack of buses on one of Vancouver's busiest transit corridors. Across the street at the No. 9 stop, another 75 would-be riders lined up.

Meanwhile, the chaos was compounded inside the station where Metro counted 260 commuters prevented from boarding trains due to a "major incident" that just happened — the police had shot a machete-wielding man at 29th Avenue Station.

Twitter users branded the event a "snowpocalypse," although it was predicted by forecasters — leading many to voice frustration at what seemed to them like a lack of preparation.

A TransLink staff person roamed the line assuring University of British Columbia students their morning exams were cancelled, and that buses were not arriving yet "because the roads haven't been plowed … They're trying to dig them out."

If Sugathan was worried about being in trouble for being hours late to his job, his cheerful demeanour concealed it well.

"The funny thing is, I found my supervisor also waiting for the bus," he said, gesturing to the second person in line.

"This is the new normal for transit," Sugathan's supervisor Jake Hossain told Metro. "There's literally nothing we can do."

Throughout the morning, TransLink staff tweeted their apologies for a litany of other delays caused by everything from "snow accumulations tripping safety alarms along the system," to "a tree fallen over the tracks," and "a medical emergency."

"Currently, many bus routes across the region are reporting stuck buses and impassable roads," the agency tweeted. "Expect delays and dress warm."

For coworkers Sugathan and Hossain, the snowy roads were obviously the main culprit Monday — but with numerous weather warnings, and several previous snowstorms to practice with, they laid blame with the city and TransLink.

"At least 10 per cent of their buses should be equipped for this kind of weather condition," Sugathan said. "Not all of them, but just one-in-ten would be enough. They really should do something."

"Can't they at least plow Broadway Avenue?" Hossain asked. "It's like they don't care."

Metro counted roughly 700 transit hopefuls stranded by 8:30 a.m. Monday at Commercial-Broadway station.
DAVID P. BALL/METRO

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HOMELESSNESS

Community centres offering warm beds

Wanyee Li
Metro | Vancouver

More than 150 people used the Vancouver's community centres as warming shelters Sunday night and the city kept the three centres open again Monday night.

The West End Community Centre saw 38 people come in from the cold Sunday night while Creekside and Britannia saw 25 and 30 people, respectively.

The city continued to keep these three community centres overnight on Monday, according to a written release.

The Khalsa Diwan Society also opened its doors and sheltered 17 people from the rain and snow. Yellow Cab gave people a ride to the warming shelters free of charge.

People were able to receive hot beverages at the warming shelters and space to spend the night if they wish.

Vancouver has 956 permanent shelter beds and 195 temporary shelter beds. Up to 234 more beds are available during extreme weather.

The city says it is working with BC Housing to create more winter shelter opportunities.

956

Vancouver's permanent shelter beds. There are also 195 temporary shelter beds and 234 more for extreme weather.

Bus routes are changing
The opening of the Evergreen Extension provides an opportunity to revise the bus network to better meet community needs and provide more direct connections to SkyTrain and West Coast Express.
Starting Monday, December 19, some of the bus routes in the Tri-Cities and surrounding areas will change. Know before you go at translink.ca/servicechanges
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TRANSLINK

Vancouver park board chair Mike Wiebe. CONTRIBUTED

New chair promises changes

PARK BOARD

Non-Partisan Association loses majority

Jen St. Denis
Metro | Vancouver

It's a new era for the Vancouver park board — one less divided amongst political lines, says the new board chair, Green Party commissioner Mike Wiebe.

Wiebe won the position Dec. 12 after Non-Partisan Association commissioner and vice-chair Erin Shum voted for Wiebe instead of her NPA colleague Sarah Kirby-Young, the previous chair.

Shum now sits as an independent.

"I didn't leave the NPA," wrote Shum in an emailed statement. "The NPA caucus left me. It became clear there was no longer a purpose, a future, or an agenda to benefit communities. It became clear that some loud voices in the caucus had forgotten the values and the voters that got us elected, and had mistaken bullying for leadership."

The NPA, the historic opponent of Vision, no longer has a majority on the board, Wiebe said. And that means things are going to be done a little differently from now on.

"We're going to have to work more as a team and more collaboratively going forward," Wiebe says.

Upcoming issues include an ongoing and at time contentious negotiation with community centre associations around new joint operating agreements, which propose to put two per cent of revenue from the community centres into a general fund.

"It might take a couple of meetings in a row that we're just going to listen to what they have to say about the JOA, what they're looking for," Wiebe said. "And instead of voting right after, we'll be looking at maybe pushing that process a little bit so we can respond and put some of their feedback into the document."

SURREY

Boy drowns in bathtub

A six-year-old boy has died after apparently drowning in a bathtub Sunday evening in a Surrey residence, according to the RCMP.

Police officers were called to the scene, near 109th Avenue and University Drive at 4:55 p.m. Sunday.

Officers arrived as paramedics and firefighters attempted to revive the boy using CPR for nearly an hour but were unsuccessful, according to a written release from the RCMP. WAYNEE LI/METRO

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Ship noise on federal radar

REGULATION

Orca welfare a concern as pipeline to up tanker traffic

The federal government is seeking a way to regulate underwater shipping noise as part of its plan to protect an endangered group of killer whales from increased oil tanker traffic off Vancouver.

The news comes as environmental groups are poised to file a new lawsuit challenging the Liberal cabinet's approval of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, alleging the government failed to mitigate the project's impact on the iconic southern resident killer whales.

Fisheries Minister Dominic LeBlanc told The Canadian Press he has been working with Transport Minister Marc Garneau on a revamped recovery plan for the approximately 80 remaining whales that spend about half their lives in the busy Salish Sea.

"Certain ships emit more noise than others, certain kinds of propellers and other things in the water are noisier than others," said LeBlanc.

A female resident orca whale breaches while swimming in Puget Sound near Bainbridge Island as seen from a federally permitted research vessel in January 2014.

ELAINE THOMPSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"There is an engineering and a scientific way that the noise can be limited by regulation. We would hope to get to a circumstance where there would be no net increase in the noise — in spite of the potentially increased tanker traffic.

"We don't yet have what the final answer looks like."

LeBlanc acknowledged that the fate of the emblematic British Columbia marine mammals, formally listed as endangered since 2005, has been further complicated by the Liberal government's approval late last month of an expanded Trans Mountain oil pipeline.

> **We would hope to get to a circumstance where there would be no net increase in the noise — in spite of the potentially increased tanker traffic.**
>
> Federal Fisheries Minister Dominic LeBlanc

Under the plan, about 34 tankers a month will move diluted bitumen from the pipeline terminal in Burnaby, B.C., through Burrard Inlet and into Juan de Fuca Strait, up from about five a month currently making the passage.

Shipping noise interferes with the ability of killer whales to track prey and communicate with one another in the hunt, and is considered one of several key stressors on the population, along with declining chinook salmon stocks and environmental pollutants.

"I'm not minimizing it, and we're prepared to deal with it," LeBlanc said.

"But it is a tiny fraction of the total marine traffic that has existed for a long time and that is on an increase because of other international, global economic factors, separate and apart from the pipeline."

Transport Minister Marc Garneau said in an email the government "will also be looking to work with our U.S. neighbour on a joint noise mitigation approach.

"In addition, given that the highest vessel traffic is from ferries, we will be also be working with BC Ferries on possible approaches that will help us achieve our objectives."

Three environmental groups sought a judicial review in June of the National Energy Board's approval of the pipeline, arguing the regulator failed in its duty to consider the Species At Risk Act as it applied to the project's impact on the killer whales' habitat. That court case remains on hold, but could be superseded later today when the same groups file suit against the federal cabinet's decision to approve.

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To: Wahida Ahmed

TAKE NOTICE that on December 12, 2016 an order was made for service on you of a Notice of Civil Claim issued from the Vancouver Registry of the Supreme Court of British Columbia in proceeding No. S157612 by way of this advertisement. In the preceding the Plaintiff claims the following relief against you:

1. A declaration that the $20,000 deposit be forfeited to the plaintiff;

2. An order that West Coast Realty Ltd. DBA Sutton Group - West Coast Realty pay the $20,000 deposit plus accrued interest to Richter Trial Lawyers in trust, or in the alternative paid into court;

3. If the $20,000 is paid into court, an order that the $20,000 be paid out of court to Richter Trial Lawyers in trust;

4. West Coast Realty Ltd. DBA Sutton Group - West Coast Realty provide to plaintiff's counsel the contact information for the defendant Wahida Ahmed;

5. Damages against the defendant Wahida Ahmed;

6. Costs; and

7. Such further and other relief as this Honourable Court deems just and meet.

You must file a responding pleading/response to petition within the period required under the Supreme Court Civil Rules failing which further proceedings, including judgment, may be taken against you without notice to you.

You may obtain from the Vancouver Registry at 800 Smithe Street, Vancouver, BC V6Z 1E1 a copy of the Notice of Civil Claim and the order for providing service by this advertisement.

This advertisement is placed by Fred Hercules whose address for service is Suite #310 – 5687 Yew Street, Vancouver, British Columbia V6M 2Y2.

HEALTH

Funeral homes asked to have naloxone on hand

As opioid overdoses spike in B.C., the British Columbia Funeral Association is recommending members carry naloxone, a drug that can be used to reverse the effects of overdoses, because of the increased likelihood a mortician or other staff member will come into contact with lethal opioids like fentanyl.

The number of overdose deaths related to illicit drugs leapt to 755 by the end of November, a more than 70 per cent jump over the number of fatalities recorded during the same time period last year. The B.C. Coroners Service says fentanyl was detected in 374 of the cases, or about 60 per cent of the deaths.

> **It is always better to have one and not need it — than to need it and not have it.**
> Charlotte Poncelet

> **During the visitation or funeral it's not out of the question that someone in attendance could experience an overdose.**
> Dr. David Juurlink

"Because this is an emerging issue and the media was reporting that first responders were being outfitted with naloxone kits, we thought it was prudent to look at how this crisis could effect our profession," Charlotte Poncelet, executive director of the B.C. Funeral Association, wrote in an email. "We reached out to health professionals and they provided some guidance."

Despite the risk to funeral home workers being "very low," Poncelet said with any kind of risk "no matter how small, education is key."

"The suggestion of a naloxone kit is a best practice," Poncelet wrote. "We do work with people in vulnerable situations every day, it is always better to have one and not need it — than to need it and not have it."

Rob Wintonyk, president of Ontario Funeral Service Association, said he thinks the danger lies "in a small portion of the drug remaining on (the deceased person's] clothes and it might come into contact with a worker."

And while Dr. David Juurlink, head of clinical pharmacology and toxicology at the University of Toronto, said the chances of a funeral home worker being exposed to an opioid in this manner are "very remote," he did say "they're not zero."

Juurlink said a more realistic reason for funeral home workers to have the kits on hand is emergencies during the funerals and visitations for those who have died from an overdose.

"People who die of opioid overdoses very often have friends and a social community of others who use drugs and those people are at risk of overdose as well," Juurlink said. "During the visitation or funeral for example it's not out of the question that someone in attendance could experience an overdose and need to be resuscitated."

Juurlink said the epidemic of opioid overdoses is "going to get worse," especially with carfentanil being more commonly used. Carfentanil is a very potent opioid, Juurlink said, such that "the amount that would fit on the head of a pin would kill most people."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Caitlan Coleman and Joshua Boyle with their children. TWITTER

Canadian hostage, kids seen in video

AFGHANISTAN

Held since 2012, family describes 'Kafkaesque nightmare'

A video showing the two children of Canadian captive Joshua Boyle and his American wife Caitlan Coleman for the first time was posted online Monday as Coleman describes what they call a "Kafkaesque nightmare."

The family has been held by the Taliban-linked Haqqani Network since 2012 — both boys born in captivity. Coleman says the video was made Dec. 3 and as they ask for their freedom she says both her children "have seen their mother defiled."

"We understand both sides hate us," she says. "And are content to leave us and our two surviving children in these problem s… We ask quickly that in our collective fourteenth year of prison, urge the governments on both sides to reach some agreement to allow us freedom."

Boyle, 33, and Coleman, 31, were kidnapped near Kabul during a backpacking trip through Central Asia in October 2012. Coleman was five months pregnant at the time and gave birth to their son in custody. They had a second boy in 2015, after what Boyle told his parents was a "7 ½ month surreptitious pregnancy."

> **We urge the governments on both sides to reach some agreement to allow us freedom.**
> Caitlan Coleman

Boyle delivered his second son in the darkness by flashlight. "Ta-da!" he wrote in correspondence seen by Torstar News Service. "The astonished captors were good and brought all our post-partum needs, so he is now fat and healthy, praise God."

Boyle's writings, delivered through intermediaries and written in his tiny penmanship, provided a glimpse into his family's life in captivity.

The writings refer to the boys, along with Stompin' Tom Connors lyrics and Mother Teresa quotes, International Space Station and Rudyard Kipling and Thomas Merton poems.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

ELECTIONS

Feds want 'moot' hearing on expat voting put on hold

Proposed legislation granting long-term Canadian expats the right to vote will render a court fight over the issue moot, the federal government argues in new filings.

As a result, the government is calling for a year-long adjournment of a Supreme Court of Canada hearing — set for February — in which two expats were expected to challenge parts of the Canada Elections Act that have disenfranchised them. THE CANADIAN PRESS

HALIFAX

Shipping delay leaves critters stranded at airport

Adina Bresge
For Metro | Halifax

A batch of live animals are recovering in their enclosures after a harrowing, four-day shipping delay at the Halifax airport, according to a pet store manager.

Terri-Ann Crisby said two chinchillas, two hamsters, two geckos and 40 fish were scheduled to be shipped on an overnight flight from Montreal to Gander, N.L., on Wednesday, but the order was held up during a connection in Halifax enroute to northeastern Newfoundland.

By the time the animals arrived Sunday morning, Crisby said all but 32 fish survived the journey to Pet Central in Gander after being stranded without proper care for days due to bad weather.

Crisby said she drove to the airport eight times but each time was told her shipment had been bumped. She called Air Canada to stress that live animals require need to be handled differently than everyday baggage.

> I even asked them if they could just open their containers and give them some water and food. Terri-Ann Crisby

"I even asked them if they could just open their containers and give them some water and food," said Crisby. "They said because of liability reasons they couldn't."

Growing worried, Crisby called a pet store in the Halifax area, who sent someone to tend to the critters. After nearly 48 hours in transit, the rodents replenished and the geckos warmed up on fresh heating pads and gobbled up mealworms.

"I really feel if it wasn't for them going in and feeding the animals and giving them water, they probably wouldn't have survived," Crisby said.

In an e-mailed statement, a spokesperson for Air Canada said the airline takes great care when transporting "live cargo," such as ensuring tropical animals are packed to withstand the cold during "irregular operations."

According to the airline, the pet store's shipment contained goldish and crickets.

Crisby insists she didn't order any crickets, but said Air Canada was well aware that her order included mammals because they are shipped in see-through containers.

On her final trip to the airport, Crisby said the airline representative who handed the animals to her couldn't bear to check their cages, fearing the worst.

"Of course, I took them right to the pet store and put them in their habitat," said Crisby. "They're doing well … but the fish did not survive."

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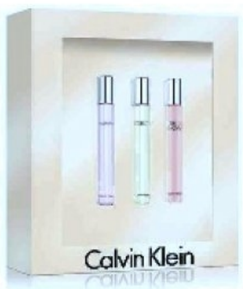

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A man identified as Mevlut Mert Altintas killed Andrei Karlov, the Russian Ambassador to Turkey, shouting: 'Don't forget Aleppo! Don't forget Syria!' AP & GETTY IMAGES

Let's talk about the real tragedy

The man who killed the Russian ambassador was born in 1994, the year of the Rwandan Genocide, and was 16 when the Syrian civil war started; a child became a man in monstrous times

Vicky Mochama
Metro | Toronto

Angry young men with weapons — trucks, guns, bombs, the Internet — exist everywhere; they have the ability to upend fragile peaces and spark destructive wars. An apparent terror attack in Berlin, and the assassination of the Russian ambassador to Turkey yesterday are being compared with the initiating acts of World War I.

I don't know if the comparison is fair, but I am concerned that these tragedies will exacerbate the global refugee crisis. According to the U.N. Refugee Agency, there are 65.3 million displaced persons, the largest movement of people since the end of World War I. Nearly a third of the refugee population comes from Syria (4.9 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and Somalia (1.1 million).

In fear, they have crossed continents by foot, on trucks, over water and by plane. In danger, they have negotiated with criminal traffickers, marine patrols and refugee camp staff. In hope, they have sent children ahead alone, sold everything to get to anywhere else and prayed for salvation. Too many have received none.

The Syrian crisis hasn't exposed the limits of our humanitarian claims. Dadaab refugee camp's twenty-five years of existence already showed our hand. What appears to be a looming genocide in South Sudan has been met with relative silence. Northern Nigeria remains besieged by Boko Haram. The Syrian crisis has solidified those limits.

It has been over a year since the body of Alan Kurdi made front pages across the world. He wasn't the last child to escape the world's wilful ignorance.

I couldn't help but be struck by the age of the man who killed the Russian ambassador. He was born in 1994, the year of the Rwandan Genocide, and was 16 when the Syrian civil war started; a child became a man in monstrous times. For him and so many, the global community's "never again" continues to mean "again and again."

Nonetheless, it is a heinous murder that, with its echoes from a century ago, is inexcusable. The true tragedy is that this horrific act further endangers the very people it claims to be defending. More than half of Syrian refugees have fled to Turkey where they live in a fraught atmosphere. In the last few months, Turkey has experienced a series of terror attacks and a failed coup.

There is no evidence that the gunman was a refugee. That will hardly matter. The example of Kenya and its Somali population shows that refugees easily become political footballs to be tossed around with calculated cruelty.

In Canada, our connection to the plight of the Kurdi family spurred a national response. Whether as duty or as penance, we took in 25,000 Syrians. That is a drop in the bucket. This effort pales in comparison to the scale of the crisis. "Refugees Welcome" should be more than a slogan, it should become our way of life.

LATEST NEWS

TURKEY

Gunman kills Russian ambassador

A Turkish policeman fatally shot Russia's ambassador to Turkey on Monday in front of a gathering at a photo exhibit and then, pacing near the body of his victim, appeared to condemn Russia's military role in Syria, shouting: "Don't forget Aleppo! Don't forget Syria!"

People at the art gallery watched in horror as the gunman fired at least eight shots, at one point walking around Ambassador Andrei Karlov as he lay motionless and shooting him at close range.

The assailant, who was identified as Mevlut Mert Altintas, a 22-year-old member of Ankara's riot police squad, was later killed in a shootout with police. Three other people were wounded in the attack. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BERLIN

Truck rams crowded market, killing at least 12

A truck rammed into a crowded Christmas market in Berlin on Monday evening, killing at least 12 people and injuring around 50. Police said a suspect believed to be the driver was arrested nearby and a passenger died as paramedics were treating him.

The popular market was filled with a tourists and locals when the large truck hurtled into it. Germany's top security official said evidence pointed to an intentional act, and the White House said it "appears to have been a terrorist attack." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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UNITED STATES

Obama grants record pardons to 78 people

President Barack Obama has pardoned 78 people and shortened the sentence of 153 others convicted of federal crimes, the greatest number of individual clemencies in a single day by any president, the White House said Monday.

Obama has been granting commutations at rapid-fire pace in his final months in office, but he has focused primarily on shortening sentences of those convicted of drug offences rather than giving pardons.

Neil Eggleston, Obama's White House counsel, said Obama has now pardoned a total of 148 people during his presidency. He has also shortened the sentences of 1,176 people, including 395 serving life sentences.

Obama pardoned 78 people and shortened sentences for 153 others. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Eggleston said each clemency recipient's story is unique, but a common thread of rehabilitation underlies all of them. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SWITZERLAND

Gunman attacks mosque

A gunman stormed into the prayer hall of a mosque frequented by Somali immigrants and opened fire, wounding three people before fleeing, a Zurich police spokesman said Monday.

Police were also investigating a possible connection to the discovery of a corpse at nearby Gessner bridge over the Sihl River, police spokesman Marco Bisa said.

Authorities weren't considering the attack as terrorism.

"The unknown person fired several shots and fled from the building," Bisa said. "The shooting took place inside a prayer room with several people in it. Two victims were severely injured." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Tuesday, December 20, 2016

CHANTAL HÉBERT ON TRUDEAU AS PARLIAMENTARIAN

Question period has never been a prime venue for intellectual honesty, and Trudeau is not reinventing the genre.

Notwithstanding a spotty attendance record, Justin Trudeau spoke no less than 513 times in the House of Commons — mostly as part of question period — since the 42nd Parliament opened late in 2015.

Over the past year, the prime minister delivered more bromides than policy statements. The day Trudeau rose in the House to declare his intention to set a national floor price on carbon was a notable exception.

But the climate change issue — even as it has been top of mind for the Liberal government since it took power — was not one of the topics most raised with the prime minister in the House this year.

Pride of place in the list of questions put to Trudeau goes instead to political financing and the Liberal practice of offering private face time with the prime minister or one of his ministers in exchange for donations to the party.

Trudeau was asked more than 100 questions related to his and his cabinet's participation in cash-for-access events, and the potential conflicts-of-interest that could arise from the practice.

He dismissed most of those questions with a blanket assurance that all rules were being followed. The record shows that on at least 25 occasions, Trudeau repeated the same answer almost word for word.

Trudeau is hardly the first PM to resort to obfuscation and evasion. That may be why his stonewalling has so far not exacted much of a cost.

In so doing, the prime minister mostly demonstrated the limited virtues of repetition.

At year's end, there remains a glaring disconnect between his contention that the fuss over cash-for-access is unwarranted and the guidelines that state "there should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access, accorded to individuals or organizations because they have made financial contributions to politicians and political parties."

COMMONS MAN Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks during question period on Parliament hill on Dec. 7.
ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Electoral reform was the other issue that dogged Trudeau in the House over the past year. He was on the receiving end of more than 40 questions about his promise to introduce a different voting system in time for the next election. Over the year, his intentions became harder rather than easier to pin down.

When a special parliamentary committee was tasked with exploring the issue in June, the focus of the prime minister's interventions in the House was on the mandate he claimed he had to change the way Canadians elect their government.

"Sixty per cent of Canadians voted in favour of parties that promised to change the current voting system. Canadians clearly indicated that they wanted the most recent election to be the last one conducted under the existing system," Trudeau told the House just before it adjourned for the summer.

But by December, he did not sound as certain or as enamoured of his mandate. "The fact is there are many, many different perspectives across this country on electoral reform," the prime minister told the MPs who wanted to know how he would follow up on the special committee report.

Question period has never been a prime venue for intellectual honesty, and Trudeau is not reinventing the genre. He is hardly the first prime minister to resort to obfuscation and evasion to talk his way out of unwanted opposition questions. That may be why his stonewalling has so far not exacted much of a political cost.

For all the travel Trudeau does at home and abroad, Canadians would, in theory, be more likely to catch a glimpse of the prime minister in action in the Commons where he appears more regularly than anywhere else.

In practice though, that is not the case.

In its annual tally of Canada's news coverage the Montreal firm Influence Communication found that with the exception of the federal budget, the most reported-on Canadian political events of the past year took place off the Hill.

In its year-end review of 2016 Canadian politics, CTV listed just one story — the adoption of Canada's right-to-die legislation — in which Parliament truly took centre stage.

An Abacus poll published this weekend reported that one third of Canadians had not heard of the fundraising controversy the opposition and the media have so consistently hammered Trudeau about over the past few months.

Almost half said they had not heard of the ongoing online consultation on electoral reform — and that's after the government sent a card about it to every household.

By any measure, much of what happens on Parliament ends up staying on Parliament Hill. That is not just because there are fewer journalists to cover what goes on there. But more on that in a future column.

Chantal Hébert is a national affairs writer.

Let's resolve to engage with our city in the new year

CITY HOLLER
Trish Kelly

Many of us are itching for 2016 to be over. Not only did 2016 take David Bowie, Leonard Cohen and Prince, it also took our hope that Justin Trudeau would walk his election talk on pipelines and our relationship with First Nations. Also, Trump waltzing the U.S. to the verge of fascism was a downer.

Many of us can't wait for 2017, but how many of us are really thinking about how to make next year more than another stinker of dead heroes and dysfunctional democracy?

I think the pathway out of the funk is to resolve to become more engaged in your city. I mean that in the political sense, and in other ways too.

Let's start with the political. Municipal government is a very human scale of government; the people you elect live where they rule. It's vastly more intimate than voting for your federal MP, who basically moves to Ottawa to do the job you elected them to do. Local government officials bump into the people who voted for or against them when they're at the corner store or their kid's soccer game.

Why not make 2017 the year you make it to a city council meeting to see what local governance looks like? You literally just Google your city name and the words "city council meetings" to find the agenda online for upcoming meetings. I'm not promising what you see will necessarily tickle you with democratic pride. What you see might make you mad. You might think you could do better. In municipal government, you can tell those who rule to their faces.

In Vancouver, key decisions will be made about the False Creek Flats, the viaduct removal, and responding to the fentanyl crisis. You can sign up to speak at a council meeting and you get five minutes to say your peace.

In Surrey, 2017 begins the process of rewriting the city's parks, recreation and culture strategy. Maybe you have a dog, or you play sports, or think diversity is important. Tell them what you want to see. In Surrey, you can even apply to give a presentation about an issue to city council, and you get 10 minutes to make your case.

If I'm talking a bit over your head, and direct political involvement seems too big a step, resolve to get civically engaged by volunteering. Promise to not live in a bubble. Get to know people in your neighbourhood who aren't exactly like you. Visit govolunteer.ca and find something that sounds at least half fun, and is somehow a social stretch for you.

Let's do what we can to make 2017 a better year, starting with our own backyards, and ourselves.

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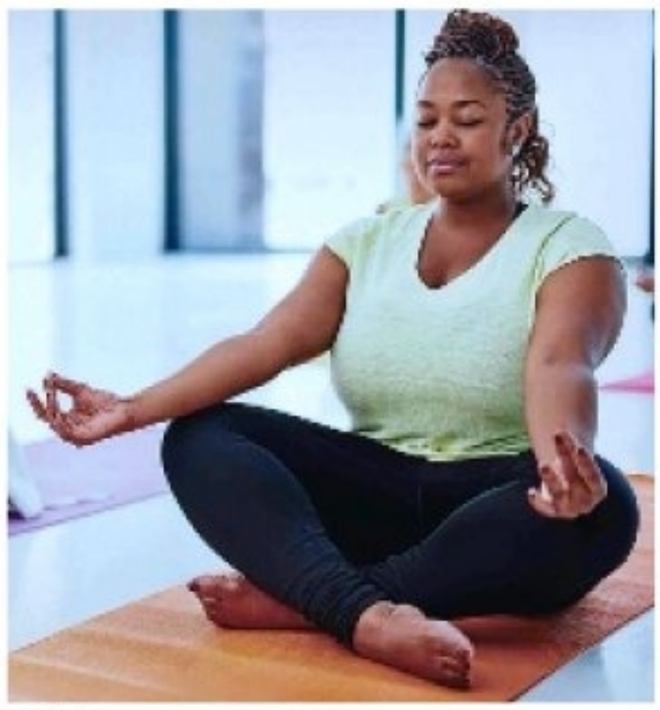
Top health issues of 2017



Dr. Gregory Taylor sees lifestyle diseases, antimicrobial resistance and healthier cities as key issues facing his successor as the nation's top medic. ISTOCK;THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INSIGHT

Canada's outgoing chief doctor talks future threats

Genna Buck
Metro | Toronto

During his tenure as Canada's official top doctor, Gregory Taylor spent much of his time responding to two viruses that weren't on our radar a few years ago: Ebola and Zika.

"The list of what I didn't get to is very long," said Taylor, who left the post last week.

In between global health crises, he issued reports to parliament on alcohol abuse and family violence and worked on educating the public about how closely health and lifestyle are connected. He even calls the health-care system the "disease care system."

In a wide-ranging conversation with Metro, Taylor outlined the health issues he thinks will dominate the years to come. And he has some ideas for how the next Chief Public Health Officer should face them.

On lifestyle diseases

There's a very long list of things we need to be focusing on. But the top one for me is lifestyle diseases. These problems are wickedly complicated. And the solutions to these problems are outside the health sector. By lifestyle, I mean obesity, physical activity, poor nutrition. One of the indicators of that is diabetes. Our rates in the last few years have virtually doubled. We're not really getting ahead at all on obesity. It's a reflection of a developed society where we eat ourselves sick.

On healthy cities

We've known for many, many years that the built environment has a huge effect on health. Some cities are very hot and it's hard on some people. The walkability of cities and the availability of rapid transit are extremely important. I work with the age-friendly cities initiative at the World Health Organization. And age-friendly cities are healthy for everyone because they're easy to get around in.

On superbugs

Antimicrobial resistance is a big issue that we're trying to face. Organisms naturally evolve and become resistant to antibiotics. We've been OK up to now because there've been new ones that have been invented. Well, we've been overusing antibiotics in humans and animals and the rate at which they become resistant has increased. The drug companies aren't producing new antibiotics. This is a real, global crisis, and if we don't address this we're going to go back to the pre-antibiotic era — infections can kill you, and we won't be able to do minor surgical procedures.

On the direction of research

We need research to make sure we're implementing the knowledge and science we already have. It took us 40 years to get tobacco rates down. And we knew for a long, long time how dangerous tobacco was. We focus a lot on educating people. And that's great. But it's not sufficient to do behaviour change. Vaccination hesitancy is a really good example. We have safe, effective, cheap interventions that prevent disease. Yet we have significant numbers of Canadians who don't trust that. So how do we convince those to trust us? That's some of the implementation research we need.

It's a reflection of a society where we eat ourselves sick.
Dr Gregory Taylor, on diabetes rates

On what Canada's next top doctor will face

What keeps me up at night, and what I assume will keep the next person up at night, is that we really don't know what those unforeseen things are. Nobody could have predicted Ebola. What's next? We're not sure. It's most likely, because of climate change and factors like that, that it's going to be a vector-borne disease (a disease, like malaria, that is spread from person to person by a vector such as mosquitoes). What keeps me up at night is making sure we have the right staff and the right competencies so that we're prepared no matter what.

STUDY

Does a doctor's gender help your chances of survival?

What if your doctor's gender could influence your chance of surviving a visit to the hospital?

A study of older patients hospitalized for common illnesses raises that provocative possibility — and also lots of questions. Patients who got most of their care from women doctors were more likely to leave the hospital alive than those treated by men.

The differences were small — about 11 per cent of patients treated mostly by women died within 30 days of entering the hospital, versus 11.5 per cent of those treated by men. But the all-male research team estimated that there would be about 32,000 fewer deaths each year in the U.S. if male physicians performed at the same level as their female peers.

The study didn't probe why there might be these differences in survival. And Dr. Ashish Jha, the lead author, said the study doesn't mean patients should avoid him and all other male physicians.

But he said male doctors could take a cue from women doctors' tendencies that might contribute to better care. According to other research, women doctors are more likely than men to follow treatment guidelines, provide preventive care more often and communicate more.

Jha said that it was important to better understand the reasons behind the differences, and to share that information with all physicians to improve care.

Jha, an internist and Harvard Medical School professor, said he has not spoken to his own patients about the study — yet.

"As a male physician, I have a stake in this," Jha said.

32,000

The research team estimated that there would be about 32,000 fewer deaths each year in the U.S. if male physicians performed at the same level as female peers.

The study was published Monday in JAMA Internal Medicine.

The researchers looked at data involving more than 1.5 million hospitalizations for Medicare patients aged 65 and older between January 2011 and December 2014. Patients' illnesses included pneumonia, heart failure, intestinal bleeding, urinary infections and lung disease.

All were treated by general internists in the hospital. The researchers compared results in patients who got most or all of their care from women internists with those who got most or all of their care from men.

Most patients survived and were sent home within a month of treatment. But in addition to better survival chances, those treated by women doctors were slightly less likely to be re-admitted to the hospital within that first month.

On average, women doctors were in charge of fewer patients and some of their patients weren't as sick as those of male doctors, but the researchers considered those factors and still found a link between doctors' gender and patients' survival differences.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mommy brain is real

PREGNANCY

Memory stays intact, but MRI data signals definite change

Results of the study hint that such upgrades may prepare a woman for motherhood. ISTOCK

Pregnancy affects not only a woman's body: It changes parts of her brain too, a new study says.

When researchers compared brain scans of women before and after pregnancy, they spotted some differences in 11 locations. They also found hints that the alterations help women prepare for motherhood. For example, they might help a mother understand the needs of her infant, Elseline Hoekzema, a study author, explained.

Hoekzema is a neuroscientist at Leiden University in the Netherlands who began working on the study while at the Autonomous University of Barcelona in Spain. She and colleagues present the results in a paper released by the journal Nature Neuroscience.

It includes data on 25 Spanish women scanned before and after their first pregnancies, along with 20 women who didn't get pregnant during the study. The brain changes in the pregnancy group emerged from comparisons of those two groups.

And the changes, first documented an average of 10 weeks after giving birth, were mostly still present two years later. Studies showed they're a motherhood thing: No brain changes were seen in first-time fathers.

The women showed no declines on tests of memory. Based on prior research findings, the researchers think the brain changes happened during pregnancy rather than after childbirth.

What's going on? Hoekzema and colleagues think the differences result from sex hormones that flood the brain of a pregnant woman. In the 11 places, the MRI data indicate reductions in volume of the brain's grey matter, but it's not clear what that means. It could reflect loss of brain cells or a pruning of the places where brain cells communicate, called synapses.

Losing some synapses is not necessarily a bad thing. It happens during adolescence, producing more specialized and efficient brain circuits. Researchers suspect that could be happening in the pregnant women.

The affected brain areas overlapped with circuitry that's involved in figuring out what another person is thinking and feeling. That's a handy ability for a mother tending to an infant.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Natalie Bobier-Gariépy named her baby Liam, which is Canada's top boy name for 2016. CONTRIBUTED

BABY NAMES

Liam and Sophia are country's top names

Canada's only countrywide list of baby names has tabulated its 2016 data and found that Liam and Sophia are the most popular choices this year.

Emma and Olivia rounded out the top Canadian girls' names, while Noah and Lucas were the other two most-popular names for boys.

The Top 100 list was compiled by BabyCenter.ca, which sends new parents newsletters that track their child's development. When parents register for the baby updates, the child's name is put into their private database, which is the basis for the list.

Many new parents chose "strong" names for their daughters in 2016. The name Adele jumped 33 places, Canadian kids were named Hillary and Clinton (given to a boy), and the Obama effect was even felt up north: Michelle found a spot in the Top 100 after several years off the list entirely.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

THE TOP 10

Canada's hottest names for 2016:
Girls: (1) Sophia, **(2)** Olivia, **(3)** Emma, **(4)** Charlotte, **(5)** Ava, **(6)** Chloe, **(7)** Zoey, **(8)** Amelia, **(9)** Abigail, **(10)** Mia.
Boys: (1) Liam, **(2)** Noah, **(3)** Lucas, **(4)** Oliver, **(5)** Benjamin, **(6)** Logan, **(7)** Owen, **(8)** Jacob, **(9)** Jack, **(10)** Ethan.

TREATMENT

Managing morning sickness

Morning sickness can really put a damper on the experience of being pregnant, but the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists hopes updated treatment guidelines will help women better manage the condition.

Between 50 and 80 per cent of women are affected by nausea and/or vomiting during pregnancy, yet many don't seek treatment because they worry about the potential risks of medications on the developing fetus, said Dr. Jennifer Blake, CEO of the professional medical organization.

Managing the condition "can have a profound effect on improving women's health and their quality of life during pregnancy. However there are many safe and effective pharma and non-pharmacological options available," Blake said in a statement following the release of the guidelines.

Most women who experience morning sickness find it passes by the end of their first trimester, said Kim Campbell, a registered midwife at the University of B.C. who co-authored the guidelines. Others, however, will suffer throughout their pregnancy.

Stomach-churning symptoms range from mild to severe, she said. "It's the spectrum — a little bit (of sickness) or you could be throwing up many times a day."

Sometimes, women can't ingest either liquids or food and are in danger of being dehydrated and not getting adequate nutrition; some end up being admitted to hospital, as was the case with Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge.

"In the more extreme cases, where you can't keep anything down, you can't socialize properly, you can't go to work, you can't look after your children, you can't care for your family and yourself," Campbell said. "So it can be significantly debilitating."

The document advises women suffering from pregnancy-related digestive upset to start with non-drug treatments such as ginger, vitamin B6 and acupressure to ease their symptoms.

"There are some new medications on the market, but there isn't necessarily a magic bullet," she said. "What we have now is more information about some natural approaches that are accessible, like the ginger and the acupuncture and acupressure.

"These are things women should feel completely free to do and they're easily accessible and they're very affordable for them." THE CANADIAN PRESS

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8	7	4	2	3	6	1	5	9
2	9	5	1	4	7	6	8	3
3	6	1	9	8	5	2	4	7
6	4	9	8	5	2	7	3	1
5	2	8	3	7	1	9	6	4
1	3	7	4	6	9	8	2	5
7	8	2	5	1	3	4	9	6
9	5	6	7	2	4	3	1	8
4	1	3	6	9	8	5	7	2

for more fun and games go to metronews.ca/games

A growing trend of pregnant U.S. women smoking pot is raising concerns among doctors because of the drug's link to low birth weight and other problems. ISTOCK

Doctors worry of rise in pot use during pregnancy

HEALTH TRENDS

Drug linked to low birth weight, raising concerns

U.S. women are increasingly using marijuana during pregnancy, sometimes to treat morning sickness, new reports suggest. Though the actual numbers are small, the trend raises concerns because of evidence linking the drug with low birth weights and other problems.

In 2014, almost four per cent of pregnant women said they'd recently used marijuana, up from 2.4 per cent in 2002, according to an analysis of annual drug use surveys.

Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, said the results raise concerns and urged doctors and other health-care providers to avoid recommending the drug for pregnant women. Volkow commented in an editorial published online Monday with the study in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

A separate study in the same journal found that almost 10 per cent of adult marijuana users in the United States — three million people — have used it at least partly for medical reasons; 20 per cent of these users live in states where medical marijuana isn't legal.

Volkow noted that laws legalizing medical marijuana in 29 states and Washington, D.C., do not list pregnancy-related conditions among allowed uses. But the laws also don't prohibit that use and don't include warnings about possible harms to the fetus, she said.

Strong evidence of harms is limited, but besides low birth weights, newborns whose mothers used marijuana while pregnant may face increased risks for anemia and other problems requiring intensive care. Memory and attention problems also been found in older children whose moms used marijuana in pregnancy, Volkow noted.

4%

In 2014, almost four per cent of U.S. women said they had recently used marijuana, up from 2.4 per cent in 2002.

How marijuana might lead to those problems is unclear but Volkow said one theory is that it might interfere with formation of nerve cells and circuits in the brain during fetal development.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists discourages marijuana use by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Both studies analyzed data from annual U.S. government surveys on drug use that are based on participants' self-reporting.

One focused on 200,510 women of reproductive age who participated in the 2002-14 surveys. Recent use — within the past month — among non-pregnant women also increased over those years, from about six per cent to nine per cent, researchers from Columbia University Medical Center reported.

Doctors "should screen and counsel pregnant women and women contemplating pregnancy about prenatal marijuana use," the researchers said.

The other study, led by the drug agency's Dr. Wilson Compton, focused on past-year marijuana use by nearly 100,000 adults aged 18 and up who participated in the 2013-14 drug survey.

About 13 per cent said they had used marijuana; that translates to about 30 million adults. Overall, 90 per cent used it for nonmedical reasons only and six per cent used it only for medical reasons.

Prevalence of medical use was higher in states where that use is legal, but the researchers say the results suggest some doctors in other states may not feel bound by restrictions.

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HOLIDAY TRAVEL

Can dogs fly? Of course, as long as owners prep well and pooch behaves

Carli Stephens-Rothman
For Torstar News Service

When I arrive at the airport, I have a smile on my face and two brand-name bags strapped to my body. Over my left arm, I've got my new Lug bag, which is both terribly cute and mysteriously convenient. Over my right arm, I'm toting a less stylish, far more cumbersome Sherpa bag. The Lug contains everything I need for a five-day vacation and it's overhead compatible. It's literally a miracle bag. The Sherpa contains only my dog. It's figuratively an anvil.

About five years ago, I decided to stop passing up opportunities to travel simply because I couldn't find a pet sitter. I figured — since she's essentially a loaf of bread with legs, therefore small enough to join me in the cabin — why not? At this point, I don't think twice before including my pet as a fellow passenger.

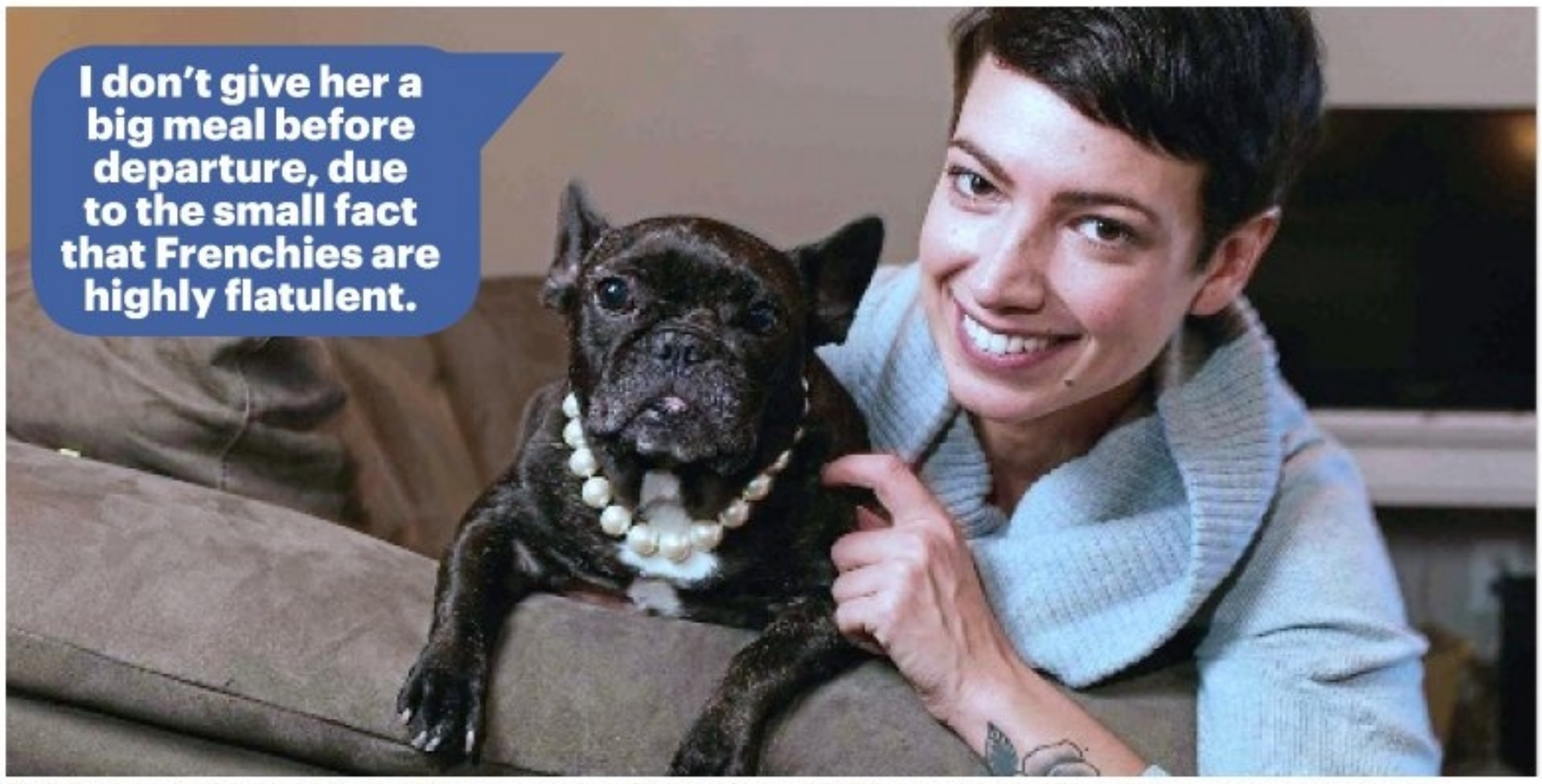
Last month, flying back to Victoria from Edmonton, a woman came to gush over Fig, my dog, who was peeking out of the carrier as I purchased a pre-flight coffee. "A PUGGG," she squealed in the direction of the Sherpa. I've learned to practise acceptance around people who mistake my Frenchie for other flat-faced breeds. After all, as far as I'm concerned, all cats and all babies look exactly the same.

"She's a French bulldog," I correct her politely.

"Does she fly often? Is she quiet on the plane? Does it scare her to be in the air? What if she has to pee? What do the other passengers think?"

I forget sometimes that flying with a pet is an experience not many people have had.

Yes, she flies often — three or four times a year and once I win Lotto 6/49, she'll be sky-bound weekly! Most major hotels keep pet-friendly suites at no extra cost.



Carli Stephens-Rothman with her dog Fig, a seven and a half year old French bulldog, complete with pearls. KEN FAUGHT/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Fig is generally a quiet dog, but even more so when we're in flight. Our vet told us that the vibrations of the plane are actually quite soothing, as it reminds dogs of lying up against their mother. So, cruising altitude for me is snoozing altitude for her. As for best potty practices, it's recommended to limit a dog's water intake for three hours pre-flight. In Fig's case, I don't give her a big meal before departure, due to the small fact that Frenchies are highly flatulent. Let's just say I've skipped many an in-flight movie to watch the drama unfold — a woman nudging her husband accusingly over a fart he didn't commit; his expression of innocence and confusion.

Truth be told, the most challenging part of flying with pets are the people on planes without pets. Not everyone is happy to have an animal on board. I've had people ask to switch seats to be farther from us and once I had someone ask me if I couldn't just "catch the next one," because "dog-smell" upsets her, as if air travel was like public transit and another flight to Winnipeg would be along in five minutes. In those cases, I just keep my head down and try not to comment on the fact that their smell, a bouquet of duty free perfume, is incinerating my sinuses.

$60

Most major airlines flying within Canada accommodate pets, assuming they're under about 10 kilograms, for about $60 round trip.

"But what about legitimate pet allergies," you may wonder. Tough Milk-bones, I guess. Most airlines will help allergy-ridden travellers by switching their seats to be further from the sneeze-inducing creature, but aside from that, allergy sufferers are not left with many options. Air Canada, for example, only allows one pet per flight, but many flights have just that.

If I want to have the privilege of flight with my fur-babe, I have to be respectful. That means answering questions amiably and handling the more fragrant naysayers with grace. It also means following the rules at all times; not taking her out of her bag in the cabin, only walking her on the leash in airports that permit it, having all health-related documents ready in advance and returning to the luggage trolley to collect my bags only after I've taken her outside to relieve herself.

Overall, though the pet carrier's heavy, I feel much lighter knowing my dog's by my side. Travelling with Fig comes down to just this: Passport? Check. Boarding pass? Yep. House keys? Probably not, but I'll figure that out when I get back. Snorting, scratching, farting four-legged beast? It wouldn't be a vacation without one.

JOHANNA SCHNELLER
WHAT I'M WATCHING

Savouring a return trip to wonderland

The SNL cast of 1975 get festive. CONTRIBUTED

THE SHOW: Saturday Night Live Christmas Special THE MOMENT: Winter Wonderland

Toward the end of this compilation of skits from SNL's 50-odd Christmas shows, this gem rose up from the very first season.

Dec. 20, 1975. Candice Bergen is hosting. Garrett Morris, in a red sweater and green-and-white striped scarf, begins singing Winter Wonderland into a hand mike. He sings really well. Backing him is the long-haired, bearded SNL house band, dressed as scruffy angels.

After a few bars, Bergen, Gilda Radner, Laraine Newman and Jane Curtin dash onstage and join in around one standing mike. They're wearing red caps, red T-shirts that read "Merry Christmas," and grey sweatpants tucked into very '70s boots. A few bars later, Chevy Chase, Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi stroll in wearing pea coats and scarves; they add a basso doo-wop. As the song builds to its final verse, low-rent snow begins to fall.

This number was a time machine for me — suddenly I was 13 years old, watching it for the first time on the red Panasonic in my childhood bedroom, in love with the cast and itching for New York. Its no-budget shabbiness was part of the glamour; its thrown-together feel radiated joy.

Everyone looks impossibly young, especially Radner and Belushi, whom we lost too soon. But I didn't feel nostalgia. I was there: in the ache of Christmas, yearning for a big life. It's not that I don't remember who I was or what things were like then. It's the opposite. I still feel like that person. It's the years in between that blur.

SNL returns Jan. 14 to NBC and Global.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

metro SPORTS

Hundreds of Wellington cyclists turned out Tuesday to ride with Lance Armstrong, who is in New Zealand to film a TV ad

Patriots co-ordinators in line for coaching gigs

NFL

McDaniels and Patricia have helped sustain powerhouse

The Patriots earned a first-round bye in the playoffs — a valuable week off that will let the players rest their legs and the co-ordinators schedule their job interviews.

Josh McDaniels and Matt Patricia have been considered among the best minds in football for a while now. The jobs they're doing this season — their latest gems came in a 16-3 victory over the Broncos on Sunday — have only bolstered their standing.

Matt Patricia GETTY IMAGES

McDaniels' best work of 2016 came at the beginning, when he was preparing the offence to go the first four games without Tom Brady while the quarterback served his "Deflategate" suspension. Using backup quarterbacks, New England won the first three and scored 81 points. From there, the Patriots' offence has adjusted, as usual, amid a slew of injuries, including that to All-Pro tight end Rob Gronkowski.

Patricia is being lauded for virtually revamping the defence on a near-weekly basis. He has dealt with personnel shuffling — including the off-season trade of Chandler Jones, the early suspension of Rob Ninkovich and the Jamie Collins trade in midseason — but has also managed to give his defence, devoid of big stars, completely new looks almost every week, depending on the opponent.

The Patriots (12-2) enter the final two weeks of the season with the best record in the AFC. They won their eighth straight division title and have already guaranteed themselves a bye in the first week of the playoffs.

Patricia and McDaniels would be available for interviews during that off week, if they choose. Last month, when the NFL Career Development Advisory Panel put out a preliminary list of head-coaching candidates, it left McDaniels off the list. That came in the wake of reports that the 40-year-old coach was more interested in replacing head coach Bill Belichick someday than starting over elsewhere.

In an un-Patriots-like move, McDaniels went out of his way to say he'd love another crack at a head coaching job. Currently, there are openings in Los Angeles and Jacksonville. In his first shot at being a head coach, McDaniels started 6-0 in Denver, but was fired early in his second season after losing 17 of the next 22. Lowlights of his tenure included a videotaping scandal and his draft pick of Tim Tebow — one of many personnel moves that caused problems and ultimately didn't work out.

"There are only 32 of those (jobs) in the world," he said. "They're opportunities that don't come along very often, and if you would ever be so fortunate and blessed to have another opportunity to do it ... it would be an opportunity that I would look forward to."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Patriots offensive co-ordinator Josh McDaniels confers with quarterback Tom Brady during a recent game in Foxborough, Mass. ELISE AMENDOLA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

> **I can't imagine that there are many other coaches that could present a resumé equal or comparable to theirs.**
> Patriots head coach Bill Belichick

POLITICS

Panthers owner tabbed for defence

Vincent Viola has insisted for the past three years that his sole focus as owner of the Florida Panthers was to win the franchise's first Stanley Cup.

He'll be otherwise occupied now.

Viola's nomination by President-elect Donald Trump on Monday to be the next secretary of the Army means he will be giving up his roles as chairman and governor of the Panthers, pending his confirmation by the Senate.

But the Panthers said the move will not change the day-to-day hockey operations.

Vincent Viola GETTY IMAGES

"Zero effect on us," Panthers president and CEO Matthew Caldwell said. "His ownership still stays with his family. There'll be no changes in positions, and nothing for the front office or management team."

Viola, a 1977 West Point graduate who bought the Panthers in 2013, plans to have the chairman and governor positions filled by his longtime business partner Doug Cifu.

The NHL offered Viola congratulations.

"The club has assured us that the day-to-day operations of the Panthers' franchise will not be affected by this development, and we will certainly work closely with the club to ensure that is the case," the NHL said in a statement.

"Mr. Viola and team ownership have further advised that they remain completely committed to South Florida and to the Panthers' fans."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

> **Vinnie has proved throughout his life that he knows how to be a leader and deliver major results in the face of any challenge.**
> Donald Trump

WORLD JUNIORS

Strome to wear C for Team Canada

Dylan Strome was named captain of Canada's team for the world junior hockey championship with Mathew Barzal and Thomas Chabot as alternate captains, Hockey Canada announced Monday.

All three are back from last year's world juniors, where Canada was eliminated in the quarter-finals by host Finland. They are expected to be key players when the tournament opens Jan. 26 in Toronto and Montreal.

Later Monday, Canada scored four goals in the opening period en route to beating Finland 5-0 in a pre-tournament game in Montreal.

Dylan Strome GETTY IMAGES

Tyson Jost and Taylor Raddysh each scored twice, Barzal also tallied, and Carter Hart made 25 saves for the shutout.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Lions bring back long-snapper Benson

The BC Lions have signed Canadian long-snapper Mike Benson to a contract for the 2017 season.

Benson was slated to become a free agent in February.

The Lions also announced that Nehemie Kankolongo has signed a two-year deal. The Coquitlam reserve linebacker appeared in 13 regular-season and two playoff games, recording six tackles. THE CANADIAN PRESS

WHITECAPS

FC2 keeper, striker sign MLS contracts

The Vancouver Whitecaps have signed goalkeeper Spencer Richey and striker Kyle Grieg to Major League Soccer contracts.

The deals are for 2017 with options for the following three seasons.

Richey posted eight wins, 57 saves, and a 0.704 save percentage in 17 starts last season with Whitecaps FC 2 of the second-tied United Soccer League.

Greig had a team-high 13 goals along with three assists, for WFC2.

Spencer Richey MLS

Richey and Greig are the third and fourth WFC2 players to earn first-team contracts, following defender/midfielder Brett Levis and midfielder Alphonso Davies.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

MAKE IT TONIGHT

Elegant Leek and Artichoke Frittata

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

This pale green beauty comes together in no time with quick-cooking leeks and soft, canned artichokes. Goat cheese and Dijon mustard give it just enough bite.

Ready in 20 minutes
Prep time: 5 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Serves 4

Ingredients
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 leek, washed thoroughly, sliced thinly
- 1 can (14 oz) artichokes, drained
- 8 eggs
- 1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper
- 2 oz goat cheese crumbled
- 3 scallions, sliced

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.

2. In a large, oven-proof skillet, warm up the olive oil over medium heat. Sauté the garlic and leeks until they soften, about 3 minutes. Now add the artichokes and stir.

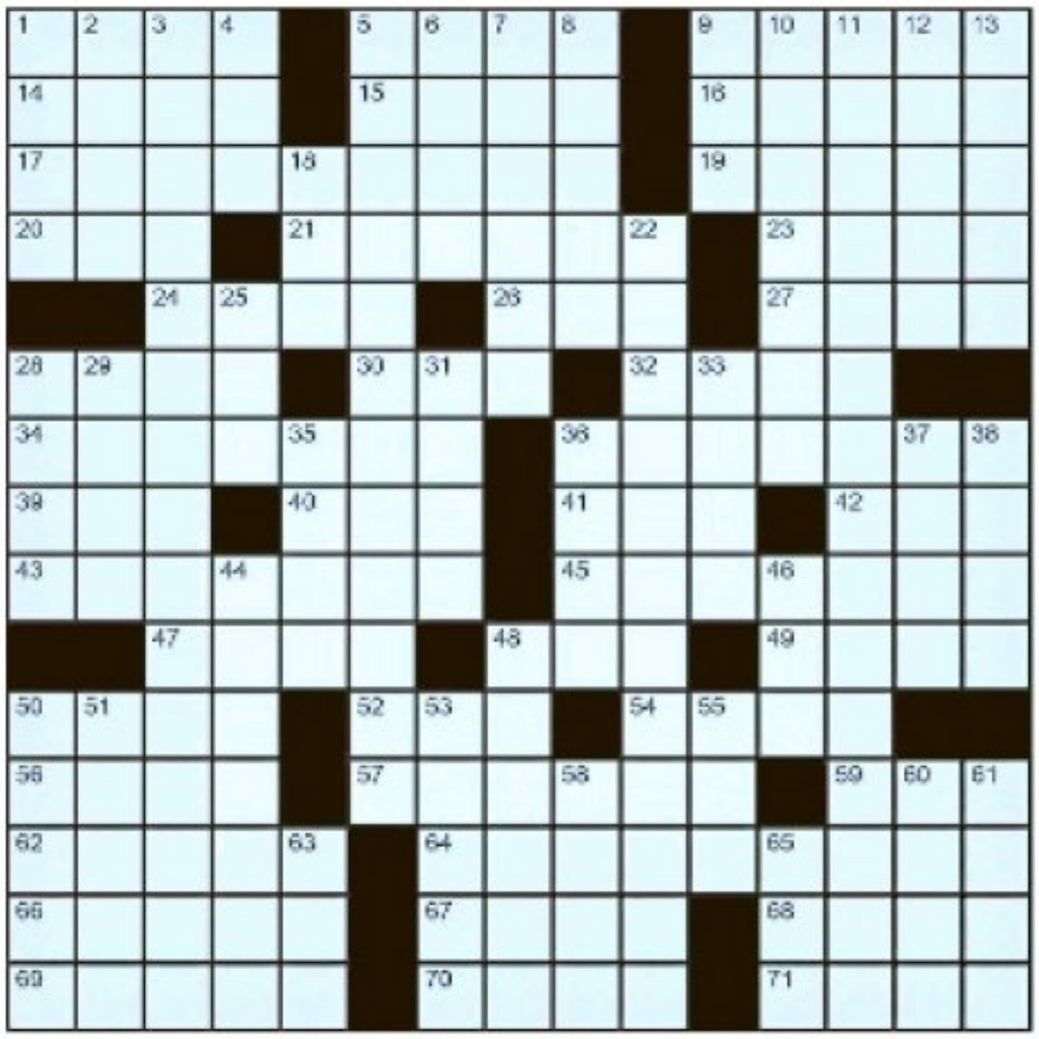
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, Dijon mustard, and season with salt and pepper. Gently pour the eggs over the vegetables in the skillet. Sprinkle the goat cheese and scallions over top.

4. Carefully place the skillet in the oven and bake for 15 minutes, until the frittata is set. Serve with a green salad.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Monsieur Le Pew
5. Sleeves
9. Aunt's hubby, in Quebec
14. Perched above
15. Tooth part
16. "Oh, _ _ a wonderful time, thank you." (Couple's departing-a-party comment)
17. Community north of Brandon in Manitoba: 2 wds.
19. Barrel slat
20. T.O. transport provider
21. In and of _
23. Paul McCartney ballad: "Jenny _"
24. "Dedicated to the _ _ Love" by The Shirelles
26. "Fantasy Island" souvenir
27. Alberta town
28. Literature heroine Jane
30. '_' _ for Christmas
32. Ginger Spice
34. Sloppy Joe sauce brand
36. Carnivorous carvees at Christmas
39. Assoc.
40. "Chandelier" singer
41. Sequence, shortened
42. Web connector, commonly
43. Puffin, for one: 2 wds.
45. One acquiring knowledge
47. US campus mil. program
48. Ginger _
49. Macy Gray hit: 2 wds.
50. Bandmate to #32-Across: name + letter
52. Globe's long. crosser
54. Heel height unit
56. _ the crack of dawn: 2 wds.
57. Arise
59. Hesitant sounds
62. Mia Farrow's activist son
64. Scrooge's sour sentiment: 2 wds.
66. Farewell, in Rome
67. "Shall _ _ the table?" (Pre-dinner query)
68. Toolbox item
69. 'Mechanical Resonance' band
70. Red Rose products
71. Firewood-making needs

DOWN
1. Role
2. Coup d'_
3. Home-created Christmas tree decorations: 2 wds.
4. Prefix to 'centre'
5. Santa's toy manufacturing facility is located in this region: 2 wds.
6. Kings: French
7. Road trip accommodations
8. Fashion sense
9. "That hurts!" equivalents
10. CTV, for one
11. Island of Misfit Toys denizen in "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"
12. Washed
13. Paradises
18. Gambling cube
22. Ice skating formations: 2 wds.
25. Fresh
28. Some punk music fans
29. Lively
31. "If only _ _ known."
33. Earth goddess in Das Rheingold
35. "Whose Line _ _ Anyway?"
36. Cost
37. River of Flanders
38. Agile
44. Jingly sleigh-puller's bells location
46. Mr. Ocasek
48. Feeling calm: 2 wds.
50. Napoleon marshal, Joachim _ (b.1767 - d.1815)
51. Lyric poem
53. Scope
55. Modern, in Munich
58. Ms. Perlman
60. Govern
61. Boot camp titles, briefly
63. Cacharel perfume
65. Commerce deg.

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
Observe your interactions with others during the next six weeks, because you could be your own worst enemy. It will be easy to fall into childish, self-defeating behaviour.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
You will be aggressive in the coming month when dealing with others, especially groups. This will help you if you coach a team; however, lighten up when with your friends.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Your ambition will be aroused in the next six weeks, which is why you will work hard to achieve what you want. Think about your goals for the coming year.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Your desire to travel will be strong during the next six weeks. Mars wants you to have a change of scenery. Meanwhile, steer clear of controversial issues involving politics, religion and race.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Disputes about shared property and the values of others might arise now. Stay mellow, because one man's meat is another man's poison.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You will have to be extra patient with friends and partners during the next six weeks, because fiery Mars is opposite your sign. Forewarned is forearmed.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You'll find it easy to work hard and give your job everything you've got during the next six weeks. Be careful not to be bossy with others.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
This is the perfect time for many of you to take a cruise or slip away on a vacation, because you want to play! The next six weeks offer opportunities for fun and romance.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Your home scene will be a bit chaotic during the next six weeks. This means you must be extra patient with family members and others at home.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
All your communication with others will be unusually direct and forthright in the next six weeks. It's a strong time for those who communicate for a living.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You will work hard until February to boost your earnings. Ironically, you also will work hard to spend your money.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Fiery Mars will be in your sign until the end of January, which makes you aggressive and pumped. This will give you lots of energy and help you get things done.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

	1		5		2		8	
8								6
		5				2		
6			3		4			7
9			2		7			3
		9				6		
1								9
	7		4		5		3	

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Get them the iPad they want.

$0[1] **down**
Plus $200 off with Easy Pay* on a Share Everything™ plan

Bonus!
2GB of sharable data[2] for 12 months

iPad Air 2

Hurry into a Rogers store today and
check out our great Wrapped In Red offers.

ROGERS™

1. Offer available for a limited time and subject to change without notice. $200 discount on iPad Mini 4 and iPad Air 2 available on Easy Pay for new and existing customers activating a new tablet additional line for $10/month on a Share Everything Plan. For as low as $0 down on approved credit (0% APR) with 24-month device financing agreement ("DFA") on an in-market Share Everything plan with tablet additional line. Payment of outstanding balance due upon termination of DFA or Share Everything tablet additional line, downgrade to an ineligible plan or transfer of responsibility. A Connection Fee of $20 per line will appear on your invoice. Taxes on no-term price apply in all cases. Early cancellation fees apply in accordance with your Wireless Services Agreement. **2.** 2GB Shareable Bonus Data is shareable across all devices on a Share Everything plan. Bonus data remains on the customer's account for 12 months from activation, and expires once the 12 months are over. Bonus data will be applied within 4-6 weeks of activation. ©2016 Rogers Communications Inc.